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Impact of the West on the Middle East and North Africa: American Exceptionalism?

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Preface

The role of the United States in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has had a problematic history alternating dramatically from a foreign power idealized in the pre-World War II period to one viewed by both elites and masses with distrust and enmity after the war, and especially since the establishment of Israel in 1948. Yet in one critical area of Arab development and modernization, America has remained an object of admiration and influence – institutions of higher learning. What explains this apparent paradox in Arab-American relations? Through a critical analysis of competing explanatory approaches – fusion, exclusion, liberal, and instrumental – this study hopes to explain and resolve this paradox with particular focus on the two leading American institutions of higher learning in the Arab world – the American University of Beirut (Lebanon) and the American University in Cairo (Egypt).

Introduction

The impact of the West on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has been deep and long lasting, most of which of a negative nature. To be sure while European colonialism provided certain benefits to the MENA countries especially in the areas of health care, infrastructural development, and urban growth, the larger impact has been detrimental to the development of MENA. While MENA viewed the United States differently in the pre-World War II period, since the US presence in the region was essentially confined to educational, philanthropic, and evangelical activities, this was not the case during the Cold War when the US became the dominant military, economic, and political power in MENA. As such it was universally seen as the inheritor of the European colonial legacy especially since it was the principal supporter of the newly founded state of Israel, the Arab world's number one enemy.

Yet in one area of American involvement in the region has remained popular with both elites and masses of MENA—higher education. This has been the case in both the pre- and post-World War II periods despite America’s destructive armed interventions and wide ranging military installations. Both the American University of Beirut (1862) and the American University in Cairo (1931), for example, remain premier American institutions of higher learning in the Arab world. Even in the current era and following the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 with all its destructive repercussions has seen the maintenance and/or the establishment of additional American universities such as the American University of Kuwait in 2003. Today, “despite public opinion poll data that show Arab popular support for U.S. foreign policy at an all-time low, the popularity of American-style education in Arab society is at an all-time high” (Rupp 3). This paper attempts to explain this apparent puzzle using the fusion approach.

Method

This paper will analyze why American higher education in MENA has remained extremely popular, despite the wide-held anti-American sentiment in the region. Several possible explanations can be considered in understanding this apparent puzzle. In this paper I will explore four approaches: liberal, instrumental, exclusionist and fusion. The liberal approach would claim that the popularity of American universities in the Middle East is due to the fact that they offer students the unique opportunity of receiving a liberal education. The instrumental approach would argue that the universities are popular because they provide students with better job opportunities than national universities. The exclusionist approach, which argues that liberal and Islamic norms cannot co-exist, would be salient only if the universities completely rejected either Islamic or liberal values. The fusion emphasizes that liberal and Islamic norms can in fact co-exist, and claims that the popularity of the universities is due to a complexity of factors. Thus,

the fusion approach would claim that a mix of liberal and instrumental factors explain the widespread popularity of the universities. Through the method of close reading, I will attempt to find which approach is most salient in explaining the high popularity of American educational institutions in the Arab world.

I will give particular attention to the American University of Beirut and the American University in Cairo since they were the first American institutions established in the Middle East. They were also established before America held important political and economic stakes in MENA. The popularity of American universities that were established after World War II would be more difficult to explain when factoring in the concept of soft power. The aim of soft power is to produce positive relations with another nation through the spread of norms by non-aggressive means. The American universities established after World War II are beneficial to America's economic interests, particularly in countries that have large quantities of oil. My goal is to explain why American universities are so popular in the absence of positive foreign relations. Because soft power can complicate my analysis, it would be illogical to focus on the popularity of American universities in oil-rich countries such as the American University of Dubai, established in 1995 the American University of Sharjah, established in 1997, and the American University of Kuwait, established in 2003. The histories of AUB and AUC are less ambiguous than those of the universities established after World War II. They were established as part of an evangelical mission, with no specific incentives to serve American governmental interests.

The analysis of AUB and AUC will be heavily based on two books, one on each school. Anderson's *The American University of Beirut* focuses on student involvement, while *The American University in Cairo* focuses on the presidents of the university since its establishment.

Both books, however, demonstrate why the fusion approach is the most salient in answering my research question of why American Universities in the Middle East are so popular.

Literature Review

The majority of scholarship that can be directly related to my topic falls under the fusion approach, which argues that Islam and liberal values can co-exist. Within Middle Eastern scholarship, historical debates exist on the topic of modernization. These debates have taken place in the same time period that the American University in Cairo and The American University of Beirut have been in existence. As early as the nineteenth century, scholars began to question what development in MENA should look like. These scholars, with the exception of the Muslim Brothers, can be considered early fusionists for the purpose of this paper. In the book *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, Albert Hourani traces the development of two distinct schools of thought in the Middle East: secularism and Islamic reformism. The former has argued that the separation of politics and religion is necessary for development to occur in MENA. The latter has argued that “neglected elements in the Islamic tradition” needed to be revived in order to reach modernity (Hourani 344). It is useful to review the interpretations of some major scholars within this debate to get a sense of the various ways in which liberalism and development were perceived in MENA around the time that AUB and AUC were established.

Today, Tariq Ramadan, a Muslim philosopher and scholar, continues to call for the adoption of liberal values among Muslims in Europe, arguing that liberal values should co-exist with Islam. Although his debate is in reference to Muslims living in the West, it is relevant in understanding the popularity of American institutions in MENA. He makes a distinction between modernity and the ideology of modernism. The latter, “which tends to impose Westernization,

does not admit the reality of the pluralism of civilizations, religions or cultures” (Ramadan, Back Cover). This ideology, according to Ramadan, is false.

Ramadan, among other “fusion” scholars, challenge the “Clash of Civilizations” hypothesis. Samuel P. Huntington, author of *Clash of Civilizations*, argues that Western civilization cannot co-exist with Middle Eastern civilization. Instead, “important and long-standing differences in political values based on predominant religious cultures will lead to conflict between and within nation-states, with the most central problems of global politics arising from an ethno-religious ‘clash’” (Norris and Inglehart 4). Huntington would fall under the exclusionist approach. His view is one of the two sides to this approach, the other being Islamic extremism. Both sides not only refute the idea of co-existence between liberal values and Islam, they see the sole existence of Islam or liberal values as a threat to the existence of the other.

The purest and historically-defined interpretation of liberalism is that of John Locke. Locke, “the father of Liberalism,” called for limited government, the protection of the natural rights of citizens, and religious toleration. It is this interpretation, rather than more modern interpretations calling for separation of religion and politics, in which many of the early fusionists used to justify the compatibility of liberal values with Islam. As I will discuss later on in this paper, some fusionist approaches are more liberal than others, such as the thinking of the Egyptian scholar Muhammed Khalid. Although technically a fusionist, the importance of Islam in his interpretation is debatable. In order to fall under the fusionist approach, one must view American educational institutions in MENA as key actors in facilitating the fusion of liberalism and Islam, not just the spread of liberal values. If one desires the spread of liberal values but is indifferent toward the role of Islam in modern society, they would fall under the liberal approach.

Liberal Approach

A liberal approach would claim that the popularity of American higher education is due to the Western-style liberal values for which these universities are the best representations. The acceptance of these values are deemed necessary for the development of MENA. Liberal thinkers would claim that integration into the modern, globalized world is the only way for the Middle East to achieve development. Furthermore, they would argue that the adoption of Western-style, liberal values in the Middle East is necessary for this integration to occur. The liberal approach therefore claims that American universities facilitate the development and modernization of the Middle East by spreading these values.

Instrumental Approach

Instrumentalism is defined as “a pragmatic philosophical approach that regards an activity, such as science, law, or education, chiefly as an instrument or tool for some practical purpose, rather than in more absolute or ideal terms” (Oxford English Dictionary). Therefore, under this approach, one would not consider the spread of liberal values to be necessary for the development and modernization of MENA. An instrumentalist approach would claim that the popularity of American universities is due to the fact that they provide necessary, that is, instrumental educational benefits, with little to no implications regarding American values, culture, or ideologies. Those who fall under the instrumentalist approach do not reject liberal values, but are indifferent toward them. Liberal values are not deemed necessary for the development of MENA, but will also not inhibit development. Under the instrumentalist approach, liberal education is seen as a means to an end, in of itself.

In order to understand the instrumentalist approach regarding the popularity of American universities in MENA, it is useful to look at the quality of Arab educational institutions. The

region suffers from a lack of educational facilities and resources and poor quality of teaching.

Rupp explains that:

there is little debate among Arab elites about the essential need to build and nurture a system of higher education throughout the Middle East. Operating on the assumption that oil revenues will decline in years to come, Arab elites recognize that a highly skilled and educated domestic work force is a requirement in a globalized world. Although there are fine Middle East universities, on the whole, these institutions have not adequately prepared their students for the local or global job market (Rupp 2).

As such, higher education is regarded as instrumental in creating jobs and protecting oil-dependent economies from collapsing in the future. Because Arab universities fail to serve the practical purpose of higher education, “Arab governments and educational elites have commenced an array of projects that are yielding tangible change. U.S. universities have been an integral player in this process” (2). Thus, in addition to their role in adequately preparing students to get jobs, American universities are instrumental in improving Arab education. In this context, the widespread popularity of American universities could be a consequence of such instrumental factors.

Under the instrumentalist approach, the adoption of liberal values is not seen as a necessary means to the end they seek to achieve, whether it be the over-all development of MENA or securing a job for oneself. The instrumentalist approach would be more salient than the liberal approach if there is either a general indifference toward the spread of liberal values.

Exclusionist Approach

The exclusionist approach argues that Islam and liberalism are fundamentally incompatible. There are two sides to this approach. One is an extreme view of liberalism, expressed in Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations*. The other is an extreme view of Islam, rejecting all Western values. This view is held by groups like Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of

Iraq and Syria. These approaches are evidently not representative of the majority of the population in MENA. However, it is important to explore these views as they are relevant to understanding the fusion approach, which claims that Islam and liberalism are, in fact, compatible.

Fusion Approach

The fusion approach claims that Islam and liberalism can co-exist. There are various ways in which scholars have justified this claim. Beginning in the nineteenth century, debate over the fusion of Islam and liberalism began in the context of modernization. In order to highlight the prevalence of the fusion approach in MENA, it is important to provide a historical context that examines how this approach has been interpreted and developed over time.

Early Fusionists

Rifa'a Badawi Rafi' al-Tahtawi, Khayr al-Din, and Butrus al-Bustani were among the first Arab journalists to consider the issues here being discussed. Beginning in 1860, "the idea of reform had taken root, raising general questions of political theory: What is a good society, the norm which should direct the work of reform? Can this norm be derived from the principles of Islamic law, or is it necessary to go to the teachings and practices of modern Europe?" (Hourani 67). Tahtawi and Khayr al-Din, both of the Islamic reformation school, argued that this norm could be derived from Islamic law. Bustani, on the other hand, argued that the separation of the political and religious realms was necessary. It is important to note, however, that Bustani was Christian.

Tahtawi held a traditional Islamist opinion regarding politics. He suggested that Islamic law and the natural law that existed in Europe were in fact very similar. Just like natural law,

Islamic law could be reinterpreted to meet the demands of the modern world. (75) He initiated a common theme among the writings of Islamic reformists who came after him:

that the object of the government is human welfare in this world and the next; that human welfare consists in the creation of civilization, which is the final worldly end of government; that modern Europe, and specifically France, provides the norm of civilization; that the secret of European strength and greatness lies in the cultivation of the rational sciences... and that they could and should enter the main stream modern civilization, by adopting the European sciences and their fruits. (82)

Khayr al-Din insisted that borrowing ideas and institutions from Europe was necessary for development in MENA. (88) He understood the importance of education in strengthening the state. He admired the Europe's educational system as well as its political values of justice and freedom. (90) It is important to note that al-Din and Tahtwai were conservative thinkers who wanted to protect Islamic principles. Nevertheless, both advocated for the adoption of European values that were deemed necessary for modernization, particularly as applied to education.

Bustani, a Lebanese scholar, was one of the first journalists to call for the separation of politics and religion. He emphasized the need for patriotism, religious freedom, and equality. Like Tahtawi and al-Din, he also stressed the importance of education. Although their political views differed, all three agreed that education should be based on a Western model. They also agreed that this would not undermine Islamic values.

Muhammed Khalid was radical in his view. He considered himself an Islamic reformist, claiming that secularism was an aspect of true Islamic law. This modernist interpretation of Islam claimed "religion which interfered in the secular realm was false" and "true religion was only possible when social and economic justice existed" (352). Furthermore, he states that the revolution would result in the formation of a parliamentary democracy and political parties. (354) Despite the popularity of Khalid's view, the Middle East was still very much divided over the idea of secularism.

In Egypt, the largest and most influential state in MENA, this division was especially deep. The ends of the political thought spectrum were embodied by two educated classes in Egypt. Khalid, an Egyptian himself, represented the class that had been taught in modern schools, based on the European model of education. This class welcomed change and advocated the ideas of modern Europe. The other class, taught in religious schools, advocated for the preservation of traditional Islamic values and resisted change. (138) Mohammad Abduh, another Egyptian scholar, sought “to bridge the gulf within Islamic society” (139). The school of Abduh is defined as “a middle group, steering a careful course between extremes: on one side the traditionalists, on the other the secularists” (193). Abduh and his followers aimed to prove that the concerns of traditionalists and liberals were not incompatible with each other. Abduh, an Islamic reformist, claimed that Islam and liberal modernization were harmonious. However, he also claimed that this harmony was conditional. (161) When conflict occurred between the traditionalist and liberal views, Abduh chose the side of Islam. Hourani explains that:

there remained for him something fixed and irreducible in Islam, certain moral and doctrinal imperatives about which there could be no compromise; Islam could never be just a rubber stamp authorizing whatever the world did, it must always be in some measure a controlling and limiting factor. (161)

Although his teachings were ultimately rejected by his pupils, he laid the foundation for new questions to be asked. For example, Lutfi –al-Sayyid, an Egyptian intellectual, was led to question the best conditions for any society to succeed, rather than solely focusing on Islamic society. (143) Sayyid and similar thinkers emphasized the fact that:

human society is tending, by the irreversible and irresistible natural law of progress, towards an ideal state, of which the marks will be the domination of reason, the extension of individual liberty, increasing differentiation and complexity, and the replacement of relations based on custom and status by those based on free contract and individual interest. (173)

Sayyid also acknowledges the importance of religion in society. However, he places freedom, the center of his thought, before religion. Sayyid's conception of freedom is liberal, particularly in that the control of the state is limited and cannot interfere with individual rights. (173) While secular ideas such as Sayyid's continued to emerge after Abduh's failure to establish a middle ground, traditionalism remained prevalent as well.

Rashid Rida, an Egyptian Islamic reformer, called for the revival of true Islam, as proscribed in the Quran. He argued that the role secularism had played in leading to European success was irrelevant to Muslim society. In Europe, nationalism had taken precedent over religion. However, he argued that the values nationalism had brought to Europe, such as loyalty and unity, already exist within Islam. (229) Furthermore, he argues that acquiring aspects of modernization, such as technical skill, "depends on certain moral habits and intellectual principles," that are contained within Islam (228).

One of the overlapping principles of Islam and modern civilization is positive activity. *Jihad* is defined as "positive effort in the essence of Islam" (228). For Rida, Islam is not an obstacle in the path of modernization, rather it is a vital tool. However, he emphasizes that Islam must be practiced in the traditional sense to achieve any progress. Therefore, Rida "condemned innovations in doctrine and worship" and argued that rights of reason and public welfare in matters of social morality "should work within the limits imposed by the moral principles of Islam" (360). Rida's view established the framework for the Muslim Brothers, a political movement in Egypt founded by Hasan al-Banna before World War II. Al-Banna made his view clear when it came to education, stating that "the Islamic government should maintain strict control over private morals and education: primary schools should be attached to mosques, religion should be the center of education and Arabic its medium" (360). Rida and the Muslim

Brothers hold a very different view on development than those discussed so far. Today, their view is still held by certain fundamentalists. It is fair to assume that fundamentalists are part of the minority who do not welcome the presence of American universities in MENA. However, it is plausible to argue that globalization has allowed for certain exceptions within this view. Nevertheless, it is important to include this view among the others to demonstrate the diversity of opinion on development and education.

Development of the Fusion Approach

Since the mid-nineteenth century, various Western values came to be realized as necessary for the development of MENA. Hourani's book provides contextual background of the religious and cultural challenges MENA has faced in modernizing and how various scholars have responded to these challenges. The prosperity of the West inspired many scholars to call for the reformation of Middle Eastern societies, whether through complete secularization or through Islamic reformation. Scholars of both schools viewed Western education as the model upon which Arab education should be based. It is clear that Islam is one of the main challenges when it comes to adopting liberal values.

It is important to note that the positions outlined in Hourani's book were held by elites, and did not necessarily represent the views of the mass publics. Additionally, this rhetoric was taking place prior to World War II. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of the early fusionists is still being discussed and developed today.

Modern Fusion Approach & Challenges of Anti-American Sentiment

An important modern-day scholar who defends the fusion approach is Tariq Ramadan¹.

¹ Ramadan has been accused of raping two women and is currently facing charges in France.

Tariq Ramadan is the grandson of Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brothers. Although his grandfather advocated an exclusionist approach, Ramadan defends the idea that Islam and Western principles can co-exist.² This is still a somewhat controversial argument since liberalism and the West are often viewed to be inherent threats to Islam. This latter view represents the exclusionist approach that is not only held by Islamic extremists but by many ordinary people who view the U.S. in a very negative light.

One important reason for this negative sentiment is the U.S.'s repressive and destructive behavior in the Middle East following World War II. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the years leading up to it provide a clear example of such behavior. The U.S.'s blatant disregard for civilians in Iraq was evident before the 2003 invasion. From 1990 to 2003, the U.S. placed economic sanctions on Iraq, which led to starvation and death among civilians. The sanctions had first been imposed when Iraq invaded Kuwait but were kept in place after the Gulf War until Iraq abandoned its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and capacity to create them. After two separate investigations carried out by international commissions in 1992 found that Iraq did not have WMD or the capacity to create them, the U.S. decided to keep the sanctions in place. The U.S. would not remove the sanctions unless Hussein stepped down, "making Iraqi people pay for the actions of their leader, over whom they had no control or influence, and by whom they were repressed and beaten down" (Smith 97). It is estimated that 350,000 children under the age of 5 died as a direct result of the sanctions by the end of 2000. (97) The U.S.'s invasion of Iraq in 2003 left the country in complete turmoil. 1.8 million people fled Iraq as refugees during the war and thousands of innocent civilians had lost their lives. (100) According to an organization called Iraq Body Count, the Iraqi civilian death toll by the end of 2007 was, at a bare minimum, 85,000.

² According to an article in the New York Times, critics of Ramadan "say he is a demagogue who hides radical views behind a polished media persona" (Breedon).

Again, this estimate does not include members of the Iraqi military or police. The death toll for non-civilian Iraqis was estimated as 7,867 and the total U.S. death toll was estimated as 3,904.

(101) The Iraqi civilian death toll is simply inexplicable and is a clear demonstration of the U.S.'s destructive military presence and disregard for civilian life in the Middle East. The negative effects of the war in Iraq cannot be overstated. This is only one example of destruction that has resulted from U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Ramadan's Fusion Approach

Ramadan maintains that liberal values are what enabled modernization in the West. Whether these values are of central importance in Western culture today is irrelevant. The principles of liberalism are the keys to modernization. However, this does not mean that MENA must forfeit its Islamic identity in order to modernize. The principles held by the West are strictly of the West. They do not own them and, moreover, they can co-exist with Islam. Thus, Westernization is not a pre-requisite for modernization. This is an important aspect of Ramadan's argument. It refutes the "ideology of modernism, which tends to impose Westernization" (Ramadan Back Cover). This ideology inhibits the collective desire of Muslims to modernize and integrate with the Western world because they feel as if it is an act of submission and/or a threat to Islam. Ramadan's work suggests that Muslims can maintain their cultural and religious identities in the context of modernity.

The first part of Ramadan's book *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity* focuses on Islamic principles. In his discussion of the political orientation of these principles, Ramadan points out that "there exists an important margin for maneuver enabling us to carry out the reforms which are impressed upon us and which should allow us to face contemporary challenges" (2). This margin of maneuver is vital to Ramadan's view on how MENA should

modernize. Lastly, Ramadan defends the concept of pluralism in the context of Islam. He claims that pluralism is a necessary aspect of modernism. He emphasizes that co-existence is itself an Islamic principle. The exchange of ideas between other cultures is an aspect of Islam that not only allows but encourages collaboration with the West. Nevertheless, MENA should not view this as dependency, nor should Western countries. The West may also benefit from ideas rooted in Islam. Co-existence, after all, requires open-mindedness and respect from each side.

In order to have a clear understanding of Ramadan's fusion approach, it is necessary to understand some of the basic principles and practices of Islam. Ramadan explains that in Islam, human character is determined by free will and emphasizes the importance of making responsible choices. (40) Furthermore, society must allow man act upon his free will so that he can do good in the world. State repression, for example, takes away individual choice. Since the individual must be free to choose, certain rights are necessary to protect this freedom. (36) Zakat, or almsgiving, is one of the five pillars of Islam. Zakat is not only a tool to combat poverty and misery, but to combat social injustice as well. Broadly speaking, almsgiving is a practice that helps protects the freedom and well-being of men and women.

The causes and magnitude of poverty, misery, and social injustice change over time, as do the available solutions. Ramadan explains that the Quran and Sunna, Islam's "two basic sources of reference, do not respond concretely to the needs and relativity of historical and geographical situations" (78). Therefore, a system exists that allows the reinterpretation of Islamic law through *ijtihad*, as long as the Quran and Sunna are not contradicted. *Ijtihad* is the process of interpreting problems that are not addressed in the Quran or Sunna. Ramadan states that:

this field of rational experimentation is huge and offers to reason a consequent autonomy to the point whereby very different applications are considered "Islamic." Thus, reason,

backed by logic and the most modern scientific means, produce answers which are religious, in the sense of being Islamically qualified and justified. (79)

Ramadan points out that this process had also occurred in the West, whose constitutions actually include religious references. (80) MENA countries are not only able to modernize, but can potentially democratize as well through Islamic principles.

One of Ramadan's main arguments is that Islam encourages pluralism. Shura is a notion within the Quran that calls for consultation of one another during the process of *ijtihad*. This applies to the 'ulama,' those who interpret problems through the process of *ijtihad*, as well as intellectuals in the political domain. Ramadan explains that its purpose is to provide a space for various opinions to be heard. (81) Ramadan claims that the notion of Shura also implies that the importance of opinion within the community as a whole. Therefore, the state "must offer the community means of deliberation and, hence, of participation in running its affairs" (84). The President of a state can either be chosen by the Council of Shura or directly by the citizens. The election of members of the Council, however, must "allow participation and consultation of the grass roots according to the Islamic expression" (84). The means of participation, whether "by direct elections or under the model of representation, may depend on historical situations, habits or existing social structures" (84). Once again, Ramadan emphasizes the fact that the political structure of Islam is flexible in regard to time and context. Regardless of context, however, he claims that the notion of Shura implies the importance of the community to participate in elections and political affairs. Another principle Ramadan derives from Shura is the necessity for people to maintain a critical conscience toward the President. "Critical participation, for Islam, is one of the fundamental duties of the citizen" (86). The separation of power is also derived from the notion of Shura. Ramadan explains that separation of power "was respected from the moment

Abu Bakr³ succeeded to the Caliphate. The judges had to exercise their function in an autonomous fashion and according to the principle of equality of all before the law” (85). All of these principles, which Ramadan argues are intrinsic to the notion of Shura, are in a way very similar to democratic principles.

Despite these similarities, many Muslims maintain that Islam and democracy are incompatible or opposed to one another. Ramadan points out that such critics

...combat notions for what they represent in the rapport between the West and Islam and not in what they are in themselves. This to the extent that this criticism, whose source we can well understand, ends up clouding over the Islamic points of view themselves. As for concepts of “democracy,” “human rights” and “freedom of expression,” it is appropriate to distinguish between normative definitions and ideological and political tools (87).

In other words, notions such as democracy should not be dismissed outright due to their ties with the West, nor should it be viewed in terms of how the West has developed this notion.

Democratic and liberal principles should be approached through the *ijtihad* and given their own meaning in the context of Islam. According to Ramadan, associating these terms directly with the West is both harmful and unnecessary. After looking deeper into the principles of Islam, Ramadan concludes that

...we can say that a number of principles pertaining to democratic societies have a place therein. The expression of an absolute opposition between Islam and democracy cannot hold from the moment we bring to the fore the bases which distinguish them apart and the principles which unite them together. (96)

These uniting principles include management of pluralism, the choice of the people, freedom of opinion, alternation of those who hold authority, and the state of Law. One cannot argue that democracy and Islam are opposed when they share many of the same root principles.

Politics of Modern MENA

³ Abu Bakr became the first Muslim Caliph after the death of Prophet Muhammed in 632.

Evidently, these principles are not adequately adhered to in the political domain of MENA. This is often due to social contracts made between authoritarian regimes and their citizens, through which leaders are able to maintain their power. Leaders guarantee welfare benefits for their citizens and, in exchange, it is expected that citizens not question or oppose incumbent regimes. According to Ramadan, the desire to have a truly representative government is not a desire to Westernize. The principles that must be implemented in order to change the status quo are found within Islam itself. Furthermore, the concept of change and evolution is an inherent aspect of political Islam:

The Islamic concept finds its strength in a vision of history which, at each stage, refers man to his points of reference and to their interpretation in order to find a forward solution, but one that legitimates its link with the original orientation. (95)

The principle of adaptability is extremely important in Islam and, as mentioned earlier, is inherent within the process of *ijtihad*.

It is now evident that modernization in MENA through liberalism does not necessitate Westernization or a withdrawal from Islam. Nevertheless, Ramadan criticizes complete dismissal of the West. This is where his argument of co-existence becomes clear:

Each religion, civilization and culture has the right to have its values considered in the light of the general frame which gives these meaning. This remark applies as much as in the sense of a critique against Western sufficiency, as it is a questioning of the rejection, sometimes simplistic, that certain Muslims manifest towards European and American points of reference. This is because if there exists a pluralism to manage within societies, there is another pluralism, no less enriching, which comes as a result of the diversity of religions and cultures. It is important to point out the riches of each one among them and to measure that which they bring to the conscience of their faithful or adherents in terms of obligations, rights, responsibilities and values. Undoubtedly, this is the only means to reach a co-existence which is respectful of specificities. (96)

Thus, co-existence can only be beneficial in terms of modernization in MENA. He uses the scientific mastery in the West as an example of an achievement from which all civilizations can

benefit. He emphasizes that “benefiting and deriving lessons do not, nevertheless, mean submission” (96).

Ramadan would agree that American universities promote this co-existence, assuming they are respectful toward the values held by Muslim students. These universities allow Muslims to benefit and derive lessons from a Western-style education without imposing Western ideals. Moreover, the universities allow the exchange of ideas between the West and Middle East. This is not only beneficial to the Middle East but to the West as well. The exchange of ideas in both the MENA and West facilitates development in the region. This exchange must occur between MENA and the West as well as between the diversity of actors within MENA itself.

Pluralism and Modernization

Exclusionist views, both Western and Islamic, are extremely damaging to any potential progress toward modernization. Long-term progress requires pluralism. Mutual action must take place that is respectful of religious and cultural identity. Integration, for the purpose of this paper, must not be confused with assimilation. It is the creation of dialogue and the exchange of ideas in the context of co-existence. The majority of intellectuals in MENA are “opposed to the Western cultural invasion and refute the consolidation of minds and morals that are being imposed today” (269). However, they do welcome the co-existence of values and the sharing of knowledge. They are not against the West, but are against Western values being imposed upon them. They want to protect Islamic values and culture but do not believe complete rejection of the West will protect or benefit Islamic society. The benefits of pluralism are numerous, especially in terms of learning from other cultures. Moreover, pluralism does not undermine Islamic values because it is an Islamic value in of itself.

The American University of Beirut

The American University of Beirut was established in 1866 under the name of the Syrian Protestant College. It is evident from its original name that the university did not initially encourage the fusion of liberalism and Islam. The Syrian Protestant College was a missionary school. Its founders aimed to “teach the most modern of literature and science with a commitment to the principles and beliefs of Protestantism” (Anderson 3). This commitment was also present in major universities in the U.S. including Harvard, Yale, Amherst. (3) All of these universities emphasized Protestant religious beliefs. Thus, when Daniel Bliss, SPC’s founder and first president, opened SPC, he followed this model as well, “establishing a fixed curriculum that left little room for debate, critique, or analysis” (4).

The true American liberal education that exists today had yet to develop and was not the foundation upon which the American University of Beirut was established. Furthermore, religious classes were required of all students, regardless of their faith (4). These requirements and the university’s religious mission in general were maintained until 1920, when the school changed its name to the American University of Beirut and Bliss’s tenure came to an end. Two factors allowed for the fusion approach to eventually prevail: the emergence of Western liberal education and the notion of Islamic reformation.

During the nineteenth century, the West was viewed as an example of progress and modernity in MENA. The West’s strong presence in the region allowed for this observation to be made. It also highlighted the issues in MENA that were inhibiting its development. As a result, Islamic reformation was being discussed among the Arab elite. The establishment of American and European institutions helped initiate the debates about modernization in MENA, which were discussed in Hourani’s book. In the nineteenth century, “the late Ottoman state assigned

education the conflicted task of attempting to ward off Western encroachment by adapting Western-style education to suit Ottoman needs” as adequate education was understood to be an “inherently a powerful commodity, able to transform society” (10). Western-style education was viewed to be superior to Arab-style education, which emphasized memorization of the Qur’an and neglected important subjects such as science. (9)

The Ottoman Empire’s goals in adopting Western-style education were clearly instrumental. The leaders of the Ottoman Empire hoped that graduates “would work together to aid the sultan in his reform efforts,” through which they attempted to gain the power necessary to protect the empire against the West (10). However, the opposite occurred instead as “the main distinguishing trait of this bourgeoisie was its ability, for the first time, to wrest resources away from the sultan’s control” (10). Western education remained instrumental to the bourgeoisie during this time. An abundance of new job opportunities arose and Western education had led to better job opportunities, the majority of which were connected to the West. (11) Thus, instead of fulfilling the sultan’s initial goal to ward off Western encroachment, Western-style education strengthened the West’s economic proliferation in MENA. This initiated backlash among many Arabs who felt their identity was being compromised in exchange for advancement. As a response to this phenomenon, the notion of Islamic reformism emerged.

While students in the Middle East accepted their fate of being dominated by the West, there was a simultaneous movement challenging young Arabs to take pride in their heritage. (12) This movement was known as nahda, and includes many of the Arab writers discussed in Hourani’s book. While the proponents of nahda emphasized the importance of keeping Arab history and culture relevant, they often elevated Western principles as well. (12) While some scholars, such as members of the Muslim Brothers, completely rejected integration with West,

“nahda writers held to the belief that the Arabs needed to find the correct mix between Arab historical pride and Western civilizational dynamism” (13). This concept has been promoted by al-‘Uwra al-Wuthqa, the longest-surviving Arab society within the American University of Beirut.

(2) The Arab nahda, or awakening, occurred during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, calling on students to take pride in their Arab heritage. (3) It is important to note that this call of duty reflects the primary goal of SPC and AUB: character building:

As the presidential quotes indicate, SPC and AUB imported American educational systems championing character building as their foremost goal. Proponents of these programs hewed to the belief that American educational systems were the perfect tools for encouraging students to reform themselves and improve their societies; the programs do not merely supply professional skills but educate the whole person. (2)

This idea parallels the goal of the Arab society, which has facilitated the integration of Islamic values into the fabric of AUB. However, it would not have been possible for Islamic values to truly harmonize with the values of AUB if it were not for the massive change in the structure of the university itself when it officially changed itself from the Syrian Protestant College to the American University of Beirut.

SPC officially became the American University of Beirut in 1920, the year the Republic of Lebanon was officially established. Over the following decades, AUB came to embody American liberal education in its true form. This allowed for the free exchange of ideas and no longer imposed Western values on students. Anderson explains that:

In liberal education, students succeed when they learn how to validate and produce knowledge on their own; the professors job is to demonstrate the tools for doing so. As such, liberal education espouses methods for scholarly discovery, constructed in discussions of opposing viewpoints... Students must be active participants in their own educational experience; in its new liberal iteration, education could no longer mean conformity. (5)

Although conformity to Christianity was not forced upon the students of SPC, the system of education did not encourage the exchange of opinions. In the new liberal system, the exchange of

ideas and reflection on one's personal opinion is the focal point of education. Furthermore, it promotes character-building. "The objective of (liberal) education is not just knowledge of values but commitment to them, the embodiment of the ideal in one's actions, feelings and thoughts" (5). In other words, education should translate to action. From this perspective, it is an ideal tool to reform society, especially when commonly shared values are threatened.

When the Arab nationalist movement took place in the twentieth century, it was commonly held that foreign control in MENA threatened Arab identity. The movement called for students to fight for Arab independence. (3) The students of AUB used their position as students in an American liberal institution as a tool to aid the movement. They were able to "demand authority over their own educational program and introduce into their classrooms real-life issues raging in the Arab world" (Back Cover). The structure AUB was not always harmonious with the values of its students. In many instances, there was conflict between the students and the administration. (3) This conflict is vital to the evolution of AUB into an institution that truly represents its student body and holds true to its mission of character building. However, the fusion of American and Arab components was necessary for this evolution to occur as the American liberal education model essentially allowed for these changes to take place:

The students streaming through the Main Gate year after year used both of these American and Arab elements to help make the school not only an American institution but also one *of* the Arab world and *of* Beirut. (3)

History of AUB

Understanding the history of AUB can therefore give adequate insight as to why this university is so popular among both the elites and mass population in MENA. It is also very useful to understand the role that the students themselves played in creating an educational

environment that allows for the fusion of liberalism and Islam in order to understand its popularity.

One aspect of discontent among students at SPC and AUB was the educational structure. Before SPC became AUB in 1920, the curriculum was based on the classic American template, which, similar to Arab education, emphasized memorization of the elements of truth... not to question them” (27). Liberal education, by contrast, was not “designed solely to impart knowledge but also to produce it,” (29). Furthermore, it “allowed for the teaching of new tools for validating many truths rather than the understanding of one” (22). The transformation to a liberal educational structure was “a consequence of a revolution in American education between 1960 and 1900,” as well as students’ attraction to this new model. “Bliss’s efforts to maintain SPC’s unity of truth clashed with the new questions and pedagogies being raised and introduced in American university classrooms” (40). For example, in 1882, Edwin Lewis, an American theologian, gave a commencement speech in Arabic on the topic of Darwinism. Although he emphasized evolution as a scientific truth, he fused it with the religious beliefs of those in the audience, saying:

If we know God by the light of the inspiration which He sends down upon us and then we look at nature, we will find in it the knowledge which we cannot find otherwise, we will penetrate its depths with keener insight and clearer light, and we will know that the laws of nature are the laws made by the Creator. (41)

Nevertheless, Bliss was affronted by Lewis’s speech and Lewis was then forced to resign, which was met by protest by a large number of students. They respected Lewis’s teaching methods and resented the fact that he and other popular medical school professors felt forced to resign. (43) Many letters were written to the administration by students, none which were taken seriously. The students argued that the administration was not fulfilling the ideals attached to American education, such as the expression of individual opinion. These ideals were shaped by the new

American education structure, including the respect of opinions held by others. (44) The students' desire for modern education reflected the new American style, which promoted exchange of ideas and the teaching of modern sciences. However, students also wanted to integrate their Arab identity into their education. This was catalyzed by the Arab nationalist movement during and after World War I.

AUB and Arab Nationalism

During World War I, the idea of Arab unity spread throughout the Middle East. This was inspired by the Arab Revolt, in which Sharif Hussein, the Sharif of Mecca, and his son Faisal fought for independence from the Ottomans. Arab nationalism especially became popular following the Balfour Declaration of 1917, a public statement in which Britain declared its support for a Jewish Mandate was established in Palestine. Although the hope for a pan-Arab state was destroyed by the establishment of the Mandate system, the idea of pan-Arab identity did not die. Pan-Arabism remained particularly popular among students in the Middle East in particular. When it came to their education, students created their "own narratives of modernity, disseminated by the Americans on campus and the Arab writers of the nahda. By the 1950s, students pushed to have Arab political and national identity become a part of their educational experience" (19). Although they favored modern American education, they sought to integrate their own culture into the curriculum at AUB as well. However, AUB's administrative body resisted the desires of the student body. Nevertheless, the students' activism proved to be effective in the long term. Although AUB maintained the American liberal educational structure, it became an Arab institution as well. (19) It is important to note that this would not have been possible without the passionate activism of AUB's students. Their successes prove how an American institution can serve as a tool to promote Arab interests. Furthermore, even when the

students' interests were ignored or suppressed, they used American values to express the contradictory nature of the school and thus to have their voices heard.

AUB Today

Today, AUB is committed to diversity and co-existence. In a 2005 speech upon receiving his degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, His Highness the Aga Khan IV⁴ acknowledges AUB's "steadfast commitment to the ethic of inclusiveness" (Aga Khan IV). Khan also acknowledges that this commitment did not waiver during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), stating that "even this failed to deter (AUB) from its mission of building tolerance and understanding – so critical in the culturally diverse Lebanese society" (Aga Khan IV). Furthermore, he states that:

The University's fidelity to its founding notion that disciplined, objective inquiry is the property of all humanity, attracts faculty and students of high caliber from dozens of countries and cultures, challenged not only to excel in their chosen fields, but to place their knowledge in the wider context of humanity's pluralist heritage. This is a core principle of my own faith – Islam – that learning is ennobling, regardless of the geographic or cultural origin of the knowledge we acquire. (Aga Khan IV)

Khan's view of Islam is similar to Ramadan's in regard to pluralism. Khan is not only a fusionist, in his view of Islam, but suggests that the emphasis of pluralism and co-existence at AUB is one of the main reasons explaining its overwhelming popularity. Thus, Khan's statement regarding AUB's popularity supports the fusion approach.

AUB's popularity is explained by the fusion approach. While many families send their children to AUB for its instrumental value, it is evident that the ideals of liberal education came to be accepted by students throughout AUB's history. When these ideals were not upheld by AUB's administration, students stepped in to promote change and encouraged AUB to be more open and inclusive of different political opinions and cultural backgrounds. The student body's

⁴ Aga Khan IV, also known as Prince Sha Karim Al Hussaini, is the current Imam of Nizari Islam. He did not attend AUB but received a degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from the university in 2005.

activism in promoting these changes was founded on the ideals of modern liberal education, which advocates individual thinking and hence freedom of expression.

The former president of AUB, John Waterbury, has stated that graduates of AUB may “continue to resent U.S. policies and criticize U.S. leadership, but they want to import its institutional successes in governance, legal arrangements, and business organization” (Ramsus 8). Thus, despite anti-American sentiment, AUB’s continued popularity can be partly explained by the desire to import aspects of liberalism into Arab society. Moreover, liberal principles were the very foundation of student activism throughout AUB’s history, which aimed to make AUB an institution for the Arab people. Thus, the student activism that has taken place at AUB demonstrates that Islamic culture can coexist with modern liberal principles. However, this coexistence occurred only when modern liberal ideals were truly upheld by AUB, something the student body had to fight for. Without the co-existence of true liberal ideals and Islamic values that came to emerge at AUB, I argue that the university would not have been able to maintain popularity.

In an email interview with John Waterbury, the former president of AUB, I asked his opinion on the popularity of AUB. He stated that instrumental factors certainly play a role. AUC charges high tuition and is able to do so “given their track record in placing their graduates” (Waterbury). AUB’s alumni/ae “tend to do well. They want their children to have the same opportunities as themselves” (Waterbury). Although instrumental reasons are important factors when it comes to students’ and parents’ initial decision to attend AUB, I believe their experience at AUB also plays a role in determining the university’s popularity. I maintain that the co-existence of liberal and Islamic values that is emphasized in AUB’s mission statement, and that exists within AUB’s curriculum, is essential to a positive experience. Waterbury states that

alumni “mostly enjoyed their educational experience” (Waterbury). Educational experience differentiates from the instrumental approach, in my opinion, because it focuses on the experience of students during their time at AUB, rather than on their quality of life after graduation. I think that AUB’s transformation into an institution that promotes the sharing of opinions, student involvement and the co-existence of values is important in explaining why students enjoy their educational experiences today. Furthermore, I think that AUB’s emphasis on co-existence is crucial when taking the diversity of the student body into account. Waterbury explains that “a diverse set of non-Lebanese students went to AUB over the years. They all seemed to treasure their experience” (Waterbury). While AUB’s graduates are extremely successful, it is important to note that the quality of education plays an important role in the school’s instrumental value. An education that promotes students to think for themselves, encourages the sharing of opinions, and emphasizes tolerance towards different views would ultimately create the ideal candidate for a job when paired with high quality training in the field. The latter alone does not compare to people who have been taught both sets of skills. While the fusion approach emphasizes the importance of co-existence between Western and Islamic values, it also indirectly emphasizes the importance of co-existence and tolerance generally speaking.

Knowing how to think critically, understanding the views of others, and being open to others’ opinions are especially important skills to have while working in politics. Waterbury points out that “there is hardly a Lebanese government in which less than half of its members graduated from AUB. In many ways these Lebanese do not see AUB as American but rather as *sui generis*, a happy amalgam of US best practice and Lebanese genius” (Waterbury). Thus, even what may appear to be instrumental can also be a product of the fusion approach.

The fusion approach is the most salient in explaining the popularity of AUB because without the co-existence of values, students would not be able to take advantage of this mixture instrumentally, as explained above, nor would students describe their educational experience as positive. If they were to attend for instrumental reasons, and AUB did not promote co-existence, their opinions regarding their educational experiences would be, at best, indifferent. The fusion approach not only argues that the values of the West can co-exist with Islam, but emphasizes the benefits of sharing ideas and knowledge between cultures generally speaking. It creates a richer learning environment and attracts more students who may otherwise hesitate to attend a school that imposes ideas and values on them.

AUB is not associated with U.S. foreign policy, neither in practice nor from the perspective of local populations. Nevertheless, there was one unfortunate incident on January 18, 1984, in which contempt of U.S. foreign policy led a fundamentalist group to assassinate AUB's president Malcolm Kerr. The fundamentalist group, called the Islamic Holy War, stated, "we are responsible for the assassination of the president of the American University of Beirut, who was a victim of the American military presence in Lebanon" (Friedman). Dr. Kerr was killed "not for being who he was, but because the marines and the American Embassy in Beirut were smothered in security" and thus "he was the most vulnerable prominent American in Lebanon and a choice target for militants trying to intimidate Americans into leaving" (Friedman). Dr. Kerr was described as very modest and extremely popular among students and staff at AUB, who "appeared stunned and revolted by the killing of their president, who in his short tenure had earned the respect of people from all parts of Lebanon's fractured political system" (Friedman). His ability to earn the respect of people with diverse political perspectives reflects the importance of tolerance and co-existence at AUB in fostering positive relations with a local

community that is divided by political and religious views. Dr. Kerr was not associated with U.S. foreign policy. However, the fundamentalists who killed him saw him as a symbol of the U.S. This was ironic in the eyes of those who had known him, as “he had devoted virtually his entire life to the study and understanding of Islam and contemporary Arab politics” (Friedman).

AUB’s emphasis on co-existence demonstrates that Arab and Islamic values, perspectives and knowledge deserve equal, if not more, attention and respect within and outside of the classroom. This helps AUB maintain its positive reputation as an “American institution *of* the Arab world and *of* Beirut” (Anderson 3).

The American University in Cairo

The American University in Cairo (AUC) was founded in 1919. Like AUB, AUC was initially established as a Christian missionary school. Despite the school’s strong religious emphasis during the first decade of its existence, many Egyptians were open to sending their children to AUC (Murphy 16). Before AUC was established, there were only two other institutions of higher learning in Egypt. Although one of these institutions, Al-Azhar, was very popular, many felt that Al-Azhar did not prepare graduates well enough for jobs. (6) This suggests that the instrumental approach best describes AUC’s initial popularity. However, some also viewed liberal education to be the best model of education for development and modernization. AUC offered hope in that it would “raise the standard of education in Egypt and help develop the scientific movement that is beginning” (19). It is important to note that relations between America and the Middle East were viewed positively during the time of AUC’s establishment. However, even when America came to be strongly resented across the Middle East after World War II, AUC’s popularity remained strong. AUC’s continued popularity can be explained by its sensitivity to the issues faced by Egypt and the Arab world. AUC’s evolution

from a small Christian missionary school to an internationally-respected, modern, liberal arts university is the result of various alterations made in response to the ever-changing environment of the Arab world and the needs of its people.

During the first decade of AUC's existence, the school strongly emphasized its Christian normative values. Students were required to take religious courses and attend daily chapel services. These requirements were strictly enforced among other regulations that promoted Western culture. For example, students were forced to eat lunch in the cafeteria in order to become familiar with Western food and American table manners. Speaking Arabic was prohibited during lunch as a way of advancing English language competence. (43) Cultural inclusion did not characterize the school at this time. The imposition of Western culture was something that was either tolerated by Egyptian Muslims or perhaps, in some cases, welcomed as a way in which liberal norms could be adopted to facilitate the integration of AUC students into the modern world.

AUC aimed to introduce new ideas and modern ways of teaching. Although the dean at the time, McClenahan, sometimes discouraged innovative methods, several professors were able to carry out new instructional techniques. (44) For example, Erdman Harris, a former AUC professor, took his students to learn outside of the classroom, visiting local villages wrought with health and sanitation problems. His students studied local conditions to determine the causes of issues such as the prevalence of blindness, infant mortality, dysentery, and other diseases. The students would then advise the villagers on how to avoid such issues. (46) This had inspired students to use their education to help solve problems faced by Egyptian society. Aiding local society would come to be a defining characteristic of AUC. Teaching methods at AUC would become increasingly progressive and modern throughout its history. One way in which AUC

modernized was through its de-emphasis on religion. As I will explain, AUC's religious emphasis became a problem and in 1930, it became clear that this issue needed to be addressed.

While AUC emphasized its Protestant Christian values in the first decade of its existence, it did not disparage Islam. During AUC's first decade, AUC's religious emphasis did not appear to be a problem. In 1930, however, AUC was forced to address the question of the compatibility of Islam and modernization after the "Fakhry incident." On February 4th 1930, Fakhry M. Farag, a physician and biology professor at AUC, delivered a speech at AUC condemning Islam. In his speech "Shall Women Have Rights and Obligations Equal to Men?" Fakhry blamed all sexual injustices on Islam. (57) The Fakhry incident had "propelled the university into a heated controversy that divided Egypt in the early twentieth century... At the center of discussions was the highly emotional issue of whether traditional religious beliefs are compatible with a modern state and economy" (58). The university denounced Fakhry's exclusionist view, which by extension aligned with Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" theory. The administration at AUC emphasized the need to be more sensitive of Muslim views. The Fakhry incident served as a lesson to AUC. From that point forward, the university would strive to be more sensitive to the views of Muslims and thus more aware of the issues confronting Egypt and the Arab world.

According to Lawrence R. Murphy, author of *The American University in Cairo*:

The American University's ability to weather a severe storm of popular criticism stemmed in part from the flexible attitudes of its leaders who realized that growing nationalism and religious sensitivity in the Arab world would require the modification of their goals. Their choice was either to change the university or to see it closed. (66)

Thus, the development of AUC into the institution that exists today has been the result of changes that were made in direct consideration toward the needs and desires of the Arab world.

One of the first changes made by AUC following the Fakhry incident was a de-emphasis on religious instruction. The required ethics courses were preserved but were taught "with less

emphasis on theology and the religious basis for corrective behavior” (66). The requirement of these courses would eventually be discontinued in the 1960s. In the meantime, ethics teachers would “encourage students to determine what standards their own faith required” (66). Another change made after the Fakhry incident was the omission of hymn singer and prayers from assemblies (66). These changes, although important, were not adequate enough to appease the highly nationalistic environment of Egypt during the 1930s.

The school’s president, Dr. Charles Watson, realized that further changes must be made. He criticized the policies of AUC and other missionary schools for imposing foreign ideals upon Arab society. Watson emphasized that

...foreigners must abandon pretenses of superiority and adopt a new spirit of humble, deferential service, so that the legitimate rights of this new nationalistic consciousness and sensitiveness shall be respected... a much greater proportion of administrative responsibility must be shifted to local people. (74)

Watson’s vision of a more inclusive and culturally-sensitive university began to form during the 1930s. Increasingly, lectures would discuss issues of concern to Egypt and many research projects focuses on local issues as well. (83) Moreover, AUC aimed to help the local community. Examples of this include the establishment of the Extension Division, village health contests, and a campaign to prevent blindness. Through the Department of Education, AUC also sought to combat illiteracy. (86) Watson’s goal of creating a “Bridge of Friendliness” was beginning to take form:

At one end of the Bridge stands Egypt and other Moslem lands eager for help in solving the new problems of this new day. At the other end of the Bridge is America, with its great resources of practical knowledge and Christian dynamic. The Big Idea is bringing the two together. (86)

Watson’s cosmopolitan ideas certainly lie within the fusion approach. As his vision continued to take form in the following decades, the popularity of the university simultaneously increased.

AUC's sensitivity to the feelings of Arabs and receptiveness to the issues they faced were what ultimately made it possible to maintain this bridge of friendliness.

It is important to note that although AUC managed to maintain friendly relations with Egypt and the Arab world, there were periods in which there was widespread disapproval of the American university. For example, America's support for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine following World War II led to strong anti-American sentiment in the Arab world. It is important to note that AUC did not take a political stance on the issue. Furthermore, although political demonstrations were prohibited on AUC's campus, many students participated in political demonstrations for the nationalist cause in support of Palestine. Nevertheless, there were times that "AUC came to be incorrectly identified with the United States government" (109). For example, in 1947 "crowds protesting the United Nation's decision to partition Palestine gathered in front of AUC and reportedly cried 'Down with the United States,' 'Down with the American University'" (109). Although AUC's existence was not truly threatened until anti-American sentiment boiled to an all-time high during the Egyptian Revolution in 1952, the university's reaction to the Palestine issue is significant in explaining why AUC remained popular during this controversy. For example, many professors openly denounced the resolution to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine. (110) When the State of Israel was officially proclaimed in 1948, AUC abandoned its neutral policy. AUC's president, John Badeau cabled President Harry Truman. He stated that "the recognition of a de facto Zionist government is unjust to Palestinian Arab rights," and that the decision demonstrates lack of "concern for basic rights and justice" (110). He continued, stating that the decision "is both unrepresentative of the people of the United States and unworthy of our country's interest in justice and freedom" (110). Furthermore, he declared that AUC's faculty felt "humiliated by the action of our government and strongly repudiate it"

(110). Badeau's reaction was reiterated in newspapers worldwide and was recited on the Arabic radio. (110) As a result, AUC's bridge of friendliness with the Arab world was maintained. Both Egypt's Prime Minister and King expressed gratitude toward Badeau, as well as AUC's students. Again, AUC's administration maintained the school's popularity through its sensitivity toward and support of the Arab people when U.S. foreign policy did just the opposite.

John Badeau is an important figure in the history of AUC. He became president of AUC in 1945 and held

...a deep affection for the Arab world and its people, with whom he communicated well... his knowledge and vision of the region would enable him years later to serve effectively as American ambassador to Egypt and afterward to maintain regular personal correspondence with President Gamal Abdel Nasser. (105)

AUC's sensitivity toward the issues facing the region proved to be especially crucial during the Egyptian Revolution, which began in 1952. Badeau warned that

...AUC would have to be careful to adjust its work to the new situation... if its leaders 'read the signs of the future as shrewdly as possible' and supported 'every movement and program that looks to a better, more liberal and more stable Egypt,' AUC's future should be secure. (123)

AUC would have to undergo various changes in order to serve revolutionary Egypt.

After Badeau resigned in 1953, AUC was without a president until 1955. During one of the most critical times in the history Egypt, AUC's board of trustees was responsible for the school's direction. AUC's ability to evolve in light of the revolution, which emphasized social reform and education, was limited while under the power of the trustees. This is because the board was very conservative financially. (124)

However, when Raymond McClain became president of AUC in 1955, innovation was his main focus. He conducted a self-study of AUC in order to properly address issues and implement necessary changes to better serve its students. For example, an Office of Student

Affairs was established. (131) Another major change under McClain was the new personnel system, which hired faculty “on the basis of ability not nationality... teachers would hold the rank of instructor or assistant, associate, or full professor depending on their academic training and experience, regardless of whether they were American or Egyptian” (131). Another change under McLain, as mentioned early, was the complete elimination of AUC’s religious instruction. (131) Removing AUC of such culturally insensitive characteristics were important in the face of high anti-Western sentiment. AUC not only respected the nationalist sentiment in Egypt but openly supported it.

The historical analysis I will give provides context as to why AUC was able to remain popular against all odds. The actions of the AUC administration during the Egyptian revolution are a crucial example of the university’s sensitivity toward the Arab world and its support of local causes. The administration’s genuine concern for the local population is how AUC maintained popularity throughout its history. Again, whether the popularity is best explained by the instrumental, liberal or fusion approach is not yet clear. However, it is evident that the exclusionist approach is ruled out through this analysis.

AUC’s support of Egyptian nationalism is demonstrated by its reaction to the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956. Prior to nationalizing the Suez, Nasser had planned to build a high dam on the Nile in Aswan in order to help solve Egypt’s economic problems. The U.S. initially agreed to lend a combined \$70 million with Britain to build the dam. (131) However, the U.S. withdrew from this agreement after learning of Egyptian arms purchases from Czechoslovakia among other activities perceived as pro-Communist. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles announced on July 20, 1956 that the U.S. would no longer aid Egypt in building the high dam. (132) Nasser considered this as a personal insult, and announced his decision to

nationalize the Suez Canal the following week. The U.S., along with Britain, France, and other countries that used the Suez, pressured Nasser to back out of his decision to nationalize the canal. (132) The president of AUC, on the other hand, expressed his support of this decision and denounced the U.S.'s behavior. This is another example of how AUC supported local causes against U.S. foreign policy, helping to maintain popularity of the university despite rising anti-American sentiment. When the U.S. withdrew from its agreement to help pay for the dam in Aswan and called for Nasser to reverse his decision to nationalize the Suez, AUC's president, McClain,

...wrote the trustees to criticize the United States' 'blunt and public manner' in announcing its withdrawal of support and pointed out that nationalization of the canal was entirely legal, that Egypt had responded to demands for international control in the same way that the United States would have reacted to similar suggestions about the Panama Canal. (132)

Nasser, the president of Egypt at the time, was made aware of AUC's position following the nationalization of the Suez and replied with an expression of his gratitude to AUC. (131) Similar to AUC's reaction to the establishment of Israel, the university once again demonstrated its concern for the people of Egypt and its opposition of hegemonic foreign policies. AUC's distancing from American foreign policy was made clear in these two instances. This is vital in understanding why AUC has remained so popular in spite of strong anti-American sentiment.

AUC once again exhibited its genuine concern for the people of Egypt and the Arab world during the Suez War. Following the nationalization of the Suez Canal, Egypt was invaded by the joint forces of Britain, France and Israel in attempt to capture the canal. During the war, AUC did everything in its means to aid Egypt. This included running a blood donation program and organizing a clothing and supplies drive for civilians. (134) AUC planned to reopen once the fighting stopped, "but in a move that reflected an increased sensitivity to Egyptian feelings, they

decided it would be unwise to open before the national universities” (134). Again, AUC demonstrated its sensitivity toward the Egyptian people by abstaining from an action that may reflect an air of imperialistic superiority.

It is important to note that the war did, in fact, have some negative effects on AUC due to the inevitable increase in anti-Western sentiment. “Whereas Egyptians had previously looked to Europe and America for assistance in their national development, they now felt they had been let down by the United States and betrayed by Britain and France. Egyptian nationalism took an increasingly anti-foreign character (134). As a result, Egyptians were reluctant to send their children to AUC. (134) Nevertheless, the school maintained an unprecedented amount of popularity given the context of the situation. This included support from president Nasser, despite new governmental policies on education. In 1958, Law 160 was enacted to nationalize all schools in Egypt. Law 160 thus “stipulated that all educational institutions be owned and controlled by Egyptians and that the proprietors, directors, and most staff members be Arab; henceforth, all schools would have to follow the government curriculum” (149). However, Nasser proposed to make an exception for AUC, stating

...that he ‘fully appreciated’ AUC’s forty years of service to Egypt, wanted the school to remain, and would work out the problems of applying Law 160 with Kamal El-Din Hussein (the Minister of Education) so that AUC’s problems ‘would be met’ ... AUC was in no danger of losing its independence. (149)

Nasser did not confirm this for several weeks, however, prompting AUC to ask once again for a final decision:

Does Egypt want us to stay and thus be able to maintain our basic concept of education? If not, the law will force us to leave. If we are allowed to exist, then we must, somehow, be exempted from the law. We stand ready to stay or go, according to the will of Egypt. We are not trying to force ourselves on Egypt at all. We have too high a regard for Egypt, Egyptians, and the program and progress of the government to do that. (152)

AUC's note to Nasser demonstrates once again the university's sensitivity to the desires of Egyptians and thus its willingness to comply with government policy. Although President McLain never received a reply, it was later revealed that the Egyptian government decided to exempt AUC from Law 160:

Kamal El-Din Hussein confirmed years later that he and Nasser had discussed the problem at length and decided that the need to maintain cultural ties with the United States through AUC was sufficiently important to justify exempting the school from Law 160, so that it became the only educational institution in Egypt operating substantially outside the government's control. (152)

Evidently, Nasser and Hussein also viewed AUC as a "bridge of friendliness" and believed this to be important for Egypt to maintain. Moreover, Nasser and Hussein did not seem to view AUC as having an imperialistic character. Although their promotion of radical nationalism would lead one to predict that they would take an exclusionist approach and nationalize AUC, they allowed for the school to remain under American control. It is important to note that this was a special exception and that all other institutions were nationalized during this time. Hussein and Nasser's decision to allow AUC to remain under American control is best explained by the instrumental approach. In his response to AUC's concern regarding Law 160, Nasser expresses his appreciation for the university's years of service in Egypt. As explained earlier, one of AUC's main goals was to help improve local conditions. Since Nasser was determined to improve economic and social conditions in Egypt, Nasser's decision can be explained by the instrumental approach. Another reason for his decision in allowing AUC to remain under American control was his desire to maintain cultural ties with America. While AUC served as a means for cultural ties, it did so without attempting to impose Western values in Egypt.

McClain's claim that AUC did not intend to force American values on Egypt was honest. The Middle East Survey Commission confirmed this after visiting AUC in 1960. The

commission also commented on the honesty and dedication of President McLain. (155) It is important to note that AUC's leadership played a vital role in maintaining the university's popularity. This is especially true of McLain, who encouraged co-existence between the values of America and the Middle East. This co-existence, which Ramadan emphasizes in his book as the key to modernity, depended upon a balance of values at AUC. (156) The curriculum thus came to incorporate "the familiar educational forms of Egypt's national universities" in addition to "the traditional American emphasis on the liberal arts and humanities" (156). In 1962, AUC described itself as a "binational university," and emphasized its "continuing ability to serve as a bridge between America and the Arab world" (156). McLain was able to maintain this "bridge of friendliness" despite the intense anti-Western sentiment that had arisen in Egypt during his presidency.

President McLain was succeeded by Thomas Bartlett in 1963. Bartlett's main objective was to become closer to Egypt by integrating itself further into the local community. (163) In order to truly "contribute to the development of Egypt... closer attention would have to be paid to the educational needs and traditions of Egypt; the missionary emphasis would have to end entirely; and students, faculty, and staff members would have to be recruited from Egypt's Muslim majority" (163). The requirement of religious and ethics courses was discontinued and many more Muslim staff members were hired. As a result, more non-Christian students began to enroll. (167) Although anti-American sentiment was at an all-time high following the 1967 Arab Israeli War, the student body doubled during Bartlett's presidency. The student body also continued to increase during the presidency of Christopher Thoron from 1969-1973. This increase in the exhibited "the appeal of the American University, even during a period when the diplomatic relations between Egypt and the United States had been severed" (194). Murphy

explains that “in part, the Egyptians’ willingness to attend the university stemmed from the enhancement of it Egyptian character” (194).

One may argue that the reasons provided above for the increase in enrollment are instrumental in nature. However, it is important to note that before 1974, academic degrees from AUC were not officially recognized by the government. Equal consideration between degrees from AUC and national universities was guaranteed in March 1974. Thus, the instrumental approach would be weak in explaining AUC’s increased enrollment in the years following the Six Day War of 1967. Positive relations between Egypt and the U.S. were re-established in 1974 as a result of President Nixon’s peace-making efforts. (197) The same year, Cecil K. Byrd became president of AUC. Thereafter, friendly relations have remained between Egypt and the U.S. As a result, enrollment rates further increased.

It is important, however, not to transpose the attitudes of Egypt’s political elite on the general population. Anti-American sentiment is still prevalent among the mass populations of Egypt and the Arab world. Nevertheless, it is still possible to view the enrollment increase through the instrumental approach, as positive relations with the U.S. meant that “an American education would be a point in their favor” (223).

It is clear that one of the main objectives of AUC has been the promotion of co-existence. While AUC’s leaders have emphasized the benefits of sharing ideas and values, it is important to look at whether this has played a role in why students choose to attend AUC over national universities. In 1975, AUC provided questionnaire to its students. (210) One of the questions asked why they chose AUC. The results showed that “their interest in AUC had been sparked primarily by its academic program; and contrary to a persistent belief, fewer than one percent had come to AUC because they could not gain admission elsewhere” (210). AUC’s liberal arts

emphasis is what differentiated it from national universities that focused on specialized training. Although AUC differed from national universities in the training programs it provided, which may affect students' chances of getting a job, students were still willing to attend. (156)

Nevertheless, the students' choice of a liberal education may still be instrumental. It is possible that students with a degree from AUC were more likely to be hired for certain jobs and this is why they chose to attend. However, the questionnaire found that the liberal approach is also applicable to understanding the university's popularity. One fifth of the students liked the liberal education specifically. (210) While the liberal approach may not necessarily explain their initial choice to attend AUC, it is clear that once they were exposed to the liberal arts curriculum and democratic atmosphere, their reactions were overwhelmingly positive. Eighty-six percent of students said they would advise their siblings to go to AUC. (210)

While many students come from wealthy families, given the high tuition costs, the general population also holds a positive view toward AUC. As explained above, AUC has been historically sensitive toward the needs and desires of Egypt. In an email interview, former AUC president Lisa Anderson explains that:

AUC has had a commitment to being of service to Egypt from the outset and this is reflected in the faculty research and the heavy emphasis on social service among the student clubs and activities. It is an expensive institution and considered elitist but the social service orientation goes far to alleviate the negative views that might ordinarily produce. (Anderson)

Facilitating in the development of Egypt has always been a main part of the school's mission. When Richard Pedersen became president in 1978, he emphasized that the need for AUC to better serve the Egyptian community and the Middle East as a whole. (Murphy 218) In addition to AUC's commitment to social service, it has also aided the general population is through its Desert Development Center, a noncredit skills program for adults could not otherwise attend

AUC (228). The purpose of the DDC was to provide training for jobs. Thus, the overwhelming popularity of the DDC is best explained by the instrumental approach.

While Murphy's book only discusses the presidents of AUC from 1919-1987, the recent presidents have continued to play a role in maintaining popularity. Donald McDonald (1990-1997) emphasized the importance of liberal values within education, especially critical thinking. In a 1995 interview, he expressed his desire to increase students' willingness to think critically. (Peterson 114) One student, who had transferred to AUC from a national university during this time, observed the major differences in the style of education. He stated that while national universities emphasized memorization and produced thoughtless and helpless people, AUC produced people "who know they can change the world" (114). McDonald's successor, John D. Gerhart (1998-2003), improved AUC's academic programs, raised money to establish new research and training programs, and broadened the extracurricular activities available to students. (AUC Website) David D. Arnold (2003-2010) expanded the undergraduate and graduate academic programs and established partnerships with the University of Pennsylvania, Cambridge, Oxford and Harvard. (AUC Website) Lisa Anderson (2011-2013) "was responsible for shaping and implementing AUC's academic vision and building the size and quality of the faculty" (AUC Website).

The popularity of AUC in Egypt and the Middle East can be explained the fusion approach, which argues that Islam and liberal principles can co-exist. AUC's popularity is largely due to its respect for Islamic values. Although AUC is a liberal institution, it has been made clear that its purpose is not to impose American or liberal values. Instead, it emphasizes co-existence and maintains sensitivity toward the values held by Egypt, and Arabs more generally. AUC's ability to balance its liberal emphasis and the values of the mass populations of

Egypt and the Arab World best explain why its popularity has been maintained even during periods of extremely high anti-American sentiment. While students choose to attend AUC for a myriad of reasons, many of which are instrumental, the school's liberal emphasis has differentiated it from national institutions by offering an education that emphasizes critical thinking and debate rather than just memorization. Again, this could be explained instrumentally if employers prefer to hire graduates of liberal arts colleges. For example, former president of AUC Lisa Anderson explained that "if AUC says diversity and tolerance are important to a good education, many students and their families will accept this without much reflection because an AUC education is a ticket to success" (Anderson). However, she also states that "some (students) actually agree that their education is enhanced by the diversity in the classroom and in the kinds of courses they are required to take" (Anderson). In response to my question about the importance of instrumental reasons in explaining AUC's popularity, Anderson suggests that while "job placement is number one for families; enjoying learning, in the classroom and beyond, is probably pretty important for the students" (Anderson).

While instrumental reasons play a key role regarding AUC's popularity, it would not have been possible for AUC to maintain its popularity had it not been for its emphasis on the co-existence between Western liberal values and Islamic values. This is especially true given the historical context of Egypt in which nationalism and high anti-American sentiment. For example, while instrumental factors led to Nasser's decision to exempt AUC from Law 160, he was fully aware of AUC's sensitivity to local values and needs and that it not only separated itself from U.S. foreign policy, but openly rejected it. This made the bridge of friendliness possible, and if it weren't for the bridge of friendliness I would argue that AUC would have been nationalized under Nasser. I would further argue that if it weren't for the bridge of friendliness, enrollment

would not have been high enough for AUC to remain open because, despite its instrumental value, any attempt to impose Western principles on its students would result in its association with Western hegemony. This is why enrollment remained low during the first 10 years of AUC's existence. Thus, while some instrumental and liberal reasons are evident throughout my analysis, they cannot explain AUC's popularity alone. Moreover, I argue that any such reason would have been ultimately irrelevant if it weren't for the co-existence of values at AUC. Thus, the fusion approach is the most salient in explaining the popularity of AUC, especially in the context of high anti-American sentiment.

Conclusion

I have examined the histories of two prominent American universities in the Arab World: The American University of Beirut and The American University in Cairo. In my analysis on AUB, I focused on the voices of students who have protested administrative policies throughout the university's history. I found that these protests mainly criticized the university's hypocrisy in promoting liberal ideals while restricting the students' civil freedoms, particularly their freedoms of speech and participation in shaping the policies that would affect them. Through examining student activism throughout AUB's history I am able to conclude that those who participated in this activism, at the very least, came to embrace liberal values to some extent. However, they embraced these values while also promoting Islamic values. The students not only believed in the co-existence between liberal and Islamic principles, as argued in the fusion approach, but fought to make this co-existence exist within the university. I believe that the fusion of Islamic and liberal values at AUB that resulted from student activism best explains why AUB's popularity, despite anti-American sentiment.

Unlike AUB, AUC has been historically committed to co-existence. The leaders' sensitivity toward the Egyptian people and their desire to provide a "bridge of friendliness" between America and the Arab world is evident throughout AUC's history, with the exception of the first decade in which religion in particular had been imposed upon students. The changes made in the following decades strengthened AUC's ties with Egypt and the Arab World and led to increased enrollment. As I argue above, without this bridge of friendliness, AUC's popularity would have remained low and the university would have most likely been nationalized under Nasser. While instrumental factors and liberal factors do play a role in explaining AUC's popularity, instrumental or liberal factors would be irrelevant if it weren't for the school's emphasis on co-existence. Thus, fusion approach is the most salient in explaining AUC's popularity.

It is evident that the explanations regarding the popularity of AUB and AUC are complex. The lack of quality educational institutions in MENA and the prominence of AUB and AUC indicate that they indeed have instrumental value when it comes to getting a job. More specifically, both AUC and AUB have been historically instrumental in the teaching of English. (Huber) However, both universities emphasize the American, liberal values embedded in the education that they offer. I found that a number of students came to embrace liberal values while they attended. While liberal and instrumental reasons play a role in explaining the popularity of the universities, I argue that the co-existence of liberal and Islamic values at AUB and AUC is the most crucial factor in explaining the popularity of the two universities.

Without this co-existence, which falls within the fusion approach, I do not think that either university would have maintained popularity. While instrumental reason can explain the initial, and much weaker, popularity of AUC and AUB, their histories demonstrate that the

adoption of a co-existence approach by the universities' administrations was crucial in dictating their future success. At AUB, student activism led to co-existence. Even though the administration initially resisted, the students' demands rested on liberal claims to the right of participation. Thus, AUB would have been extremely hypocritical if the administration had continued to ignore the voice of the student body. Allowing the students to participate in decision-making processes, and allowing the flow of different opinions at AUB, inevitably allowed for Islamic principles to come into co-existence with liberal values. If the fusion approach had never been adopted, it is difficult to imagine that AUB would have seen an increase in, or even maintain, its popularity. The fusion approach was also crucial in the context of AUC's history. As I have argued, if it were not for the bridge of friendliness at AUC and the sensitivity of its leaders toward the local population, it would not have been exempt from Law 160 under Nasser. Egypt's revolution, which took place at a time of extremely high anti-American sentiment, suggests that AUC would have never survived as an American institution. However, it beat the odds. I believe that this would not have happened if it weren't for AUC's ability to maintain its bridge of friendliness between the West and the Arab World. Thus, the fusion approach was crucial in not only maintaining AUC's popularity, but in its survival as an American institution as well.

Despite the pervasive opposition to U.S. foreign policy in MENA, particularly since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the universities have remained overwhelmingly popular. The universities' consistent popularity, despite anti-Western sentiment, is best explained by the fusion approach. While I have not analyzed other American universities in MENA, the importance of educational institutions to allow for the co-existence of liberal and Islamic values is evident. While liberal principles are instrumental to modernity in MENA, Islam is still a

defining aspect of the region. “Modernism brings with it tremendous opportunities, but at the same time tremendous dangers. Its most immediate and devastating effect is to wreck the religious faith of the rising generation” (Dodge 53). If the universities do not promote the co-existence of liberal and Islamic values, they could potentially serve to undermine Islamic values and culture. Furthermore, since the region shares a history of colonialism and oppression, one can expect that the mass populations throughout MENA would resent any American university within the region that imposes Western values through its curriculum. The universities would serve as a reminder of America’s sense of superiority and insolence that have led to destructive foreign policies, for which the U.S. is largely resented in the region. The fusion approach can thus be applied to the region as a whole because of its shared colonial past and its shared religious values. It is important to note that the region is extremely diverse. Nevertheless, MENA’s large Muslim population and its shared colonial experience are important in explaining why it is important for educational institutions to allow for the co-existence of values in order to respect Islamic values and to not be associated with the hegemonic character of the U.S.

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